

The principles of New Urbanism (NewUrbanism.org, 2005) are:

1. Walkability
2. Connectivity
3. Mixed-Use & Diversity
4. Mixed Housing
5. Quality Architecture & Urban Design
6. Traditional Neighborhood Structure
7. Increased Density
8. Smart Transportation
9. Sustainability

An important assumption of the New Urbanist movement is the tenet that architecture and the organization of space strongly influence social behavior. That is, New Urbanism, in spite of a certain postmodern cuteness in design elements, rests on the decidedly modern notion that the “built environment” can create democratic utopias. It is also a movement built upon a certain amount of nostalgia. For the New Urbanist architect and town planner the ideal form of human community is found in the ambience of the New England colonial village, town centers, green space, interconnected walkways, where people shared space intimately and nurtured social relations conducive to the free exchange of ideas perhaps best exemplified by town hall meetings. The goal of New Urbanist developments is to recapture, or even to recreate, these sorts of communities. New Urbanist developments attempt to create a space with an identifiable center and edge, in short, to create community through the manipulation of space.

Influential in the New Urbanist search for urban spaces with definable centers has been architect Charles Moore’s (1965) article in the influential architectural journal *Perspecta*, “You Have to Pay for the Public Life”. In this essay Moore addresses the lack of public pace and public sphere on the West Coast of the United States with particular focus on the city of Los Angeles. Moore argues that Los Angeles lacks an urban focus or center, and that “the houses are not tied down to any place much more than the trailer homes are, or the automobiles. [The houses] are adrift in the suburban sea, not so mobile as the cars, but just as unattached. ... This is ... a floating world in which a floating population can island-hop with impunity ...” Los Angeles is characterized by a lack of place (Davis, 1992; Jameson, 1992). Moore argues that a central characteristic of cities that are identifiable places is that there is a marked and celebrated center. Identifying a place and marking its center is a self-consciously public act where people come together to celebrate a place for particular reasons, and the marker then becomes the symbol of their shared values. In his article Moore claims that Disneyland is one of the few real public spaces in Los Angeles. Disney’s new town of Celebration has its roots in the work of Charles Moore because he was the first to point out that Disneyland was a self-conscious attempt to create an interactive public space amid the disconnected suburban sprawl of Los Angeles. In Disneyland, we agree to pay for the public life we are missing out on elsewhere, just as in Celebration.

2.2 *Civic Environmentalism*

Unlike New Urbanism, Civic Environmentalism arose not in response to failures of planning, or lack of community in cities, but in response to three failures of the environmental movement: top-down organization, over-emphasis on abstract theoretical issues, i.e., does non-human nature have intrinsic value), and the deep anti-urban bias that means the movement does not address the places where most people live.

Civic Environmentalism is the idea that members of particular communities are the ones who should plan and organize to “ensure a future that is environmentally healthy and economically and socially vibrant” (Shutkin, 2000, 14). A central insight of this movement is that in order to have viable cities we need to (i) bring the broad interest in and support for protecting remote wilderness areas to bear on our immediate quotidian environment, and (ii) reinvigorate, or create networks of community and build social capital (New Ecology Inc., 2005; Sirianni and Friedland, 1999; Landy et al., 1999; John, 1994). The guiding principles (Shutkin, 2000) are:

1. Democratic Process
2. Community and Regional Planning
3. Education
4. Environmental Justice
5. Industrial Ecology
6. Place

Civic Environmentalism is not a planning or design paradigm, but a vision of engaged communities, organizing around common interests, working to direct their own lives. As I will suggest in my following discussion of some limits of a design model of responding to the crisis of cities, Civic Environmentalism represents an approach that is open to a variety of design models, because it is directed by stakeholder participation. By nurturing democracy it is more likely to be sustainable and effective.

2.3 *What are Cities For?*

What are cities for? Why should we care if cities are emptying out, if people are living in greater levels of economic and racial separation, if we sprawl across the countryside? And: What are we trying to do as we imagine responses to our existing urban situation?

Some reasons we should be concerned with the state of cities are:

1. Public Sphere, Public Life, and Political Community
2. Community Life
3. Services and Sustainability
4. Self Discovery and Creation

As many sociologists, political scientists, historians, and philosophers have noted, modern democracy, modern cities, and the “public sphere” arise together